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ORGANIZATIONAL ACTION PROCESS

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Presented to the

AMERICAN COLLEGE PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION

Program - Organizational Skills for Student Development Personnel OR

It's Easy When You Know How!

Atlanta American Hotel
Atlanta, Georgia

March 7, 1975

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ABSTRACT

If the concept of student development is to be implemented successfully, positive action must be taken that addresses the organizational parameters of the higher education bureaucracy. Personnel who traditionally have been commited to the personal development of students, now also must devote their professional skills to the organizational resources and barriers that can facilitate the student development process. This institutional process involves the steps of goal formation, organizational analysis, strategy construction, and tactics development.

Organizational Action Process

There is need for positive action to implement organizationally the various elements of student development in the unique bureaucracy of higher education. The emphasis here is on the positive and on action.

Emphasis on the positive is required because of our contact in student personnel with the negative. One authority has estimated that 75-80 per cent of our time is spent on negative requests from others for our help. We are assuming here that some positive actions can be taken to enhance student development, but that human relations skills are only part of the requisite repertoire for practicing professionals.

We are here to encourage action. Often we find ourselves doing much negative complaining about "the system" in higher education and about the abuses it doles out to students. The next step usually is to counsel with students in an attempt to assist them to cope with this insane system, but to do virtually nothing about getting the system to adjust to human needs. This action is no longer appropriate, if it ever was appropriate. It is easy to lose yourself in the bureaucracy of higher education and not take any responsibility for the way the system is. To borrow a familiar phrase, "if you are not a part of the solution, you are a part of the problem.

Taking action organizationally is a bold professional and personal step. It involves some risk-taking, but the concept of student development itself is a comprehensive challenge to the organizational norms of colleges and universities. Behavior which is perceived as either approaching or crossing normative barriers will cause organizational strain and will encounter resistence. This resistence and strain for the institution can be reduced in one of two ways -- by changes in the influence centers of the institution or by eliminating the people who are causes of the strain. We in the field of student development must be the agents

for that challenge if student development is to succeed.

We are not here today to philosophize about whether or not you should decide to take positive action; we assume that you have made that decision- that's why you are here. We are not here to dwell on negative complaints about your institutions either; we are here to begin to take steps with you for positive action, so let's begin.

The initial step concerns the process of <u>forming goals for student development</u>. Goal formation is a complex process as explained by Perrow's classic analysis of the dichotomy of organizational goals. He described that <u>official</u> goals are statements of intended future states of affairs outlining the general purposes of the institution as evidenced by its charters, annual reports, policy statements, and so on. Viewing student development goal formation as an amalgam of official goals, while essential on an institutional or professional basis, does not facilitate implementation of student development goals because these goals do not indicate 1) the direction of daily decisions and actions among alternative ways of achieving the goals, 2) the priority of multiple goals, and 3) the individual or subsystem goals being pursued, which may or may not be facilitative of official student development goals.

<u>Operative</u> goals on the other hand tend to be more directional than descriptive by indicating the ends being sought, as evidenced through actual operating practices of personnel in the institution. These goals are not formal organizational goals as much as they are goals that individuals in institutions have created themselves. At the operational level student development goals are really shifting compromises among people. These compromises represent the difficulties encountered in attempting to implement student development and which indicate the need for a political process as much as a human relations process.

The second issue concerns these operational goals being transformed into objectives that are desirable, understandable, achievable, ethical, or measurable. The process of objectives' construction is to specify clearly human or systems performance in action terms that will describe conditions as they will be when the objective is met. Four simple, but important elements, in constructing objectives are: 1) What do you want to achieve? 2) When do you want to achieve it? 3) how are you going to achieve it? and 4) what are the criteria for assessment?

Measurement is more difficult as stated objectives are less concrete. Pressure to assess, however, encourages overproduction of highly measureable elements to the neglect of less measurable items, which has significant implications for the parameters inherent in the student development concept. Creation of objectives is usually where the process stops, a consummatory process that neglects the implementation which must follow. We are able to define the problem, but are unable to carry it out effectively. The two most important questions that mediate the objectives that are created are: 1) what is it that you want or will accept as a realistic minimum, as opposed to an "all or nothing" criterion and 2) how can you accomplish these objectives without limiting what others want, if it is possible to remain consistent with your goals, or more positively, actually enhancing what others want at your campus?

Once these objectives have been constructed realistically, success is dependent on a third step in the process - an organizational analysis of the institution, either informally or formally, but systematically. It is amazing to me how much rumor and myth exists on a campus, but more significantly, how many processes are formalized as operating policy based on these myths. Colleges and universities as social organizations dedicated to the transmission and creation of knowledge, attempt little investigation to understand themselves organizationally. As I can attest from my own research on academic rewards systems, without this knowledge rumors are accepted and programs fail.

We in higher education tend to jump on the bandwagon of the latest educational fads without really knowing whether the wagon is heading where we are going. Analysis BEFORE action is the key and neglect of it for reasons of time or costs is evidenced in the premature "rides" for many institutions on the MBO wagon, or the residential college wagon, or any one of several others. We do not do our homework and we end up with an expensive trip whose destination is not where we ought to have been heading.

A cynicism, then, arises about colleges and universities and their ability or capacity to change the systems. The resultant resistence is difficult to overcome, especially without knowing the organizational contingencies. The ability to overcome this resistence to change requires a concept that many student development personnel have rejected in their philosophies and in their professional duties - power. To implement student development programs the analysis of organizational power systems must be accomplished systematically.

This analysis should contain a description of operational goals and objectives at one's own campus. An analysis of available resources and potential barriers to the accomplishment of student development goals must be accomplished. Indentification of relevant power sources should be assessed. Finally an implementation plan of strategies and tactics must be formulated which will overcome institutional barriers and will link resources and power together supported by a contingent intrinsic and extrinsic rewards system.

An important footnote here is that this analysis should not be an extension of the complaints I mentioned earlier or concentrate on problems only. It should highlight what is right or good about an institution. These highlights, people, resources, procedures, mechanisms, are significant implementation tools, so emphasize what they are. Do not neglect the problems, but since your implementation of student development is going to eliminate the problems anyway, do not dwell on them either.

Once the analysis process has been completed, although it must be monitored periodically, alternative implementation strategies should be constructed as the fourth step in the organizational action process. The first of three general categories of strategies is the educational strategy where the attempt is made to provide learning experiences and the assumption is that individuals will take the proper action. The target individuals of this strategy have a traditionally democratic choice in determining whether or not they will become involved or which route the objectives will take. The second category is the persuasion strategy, characterized by an advisory relationship where choice of participation or direction is limited, but the details of the strategy may be altered somewhat by the target individuals. The final strategy is that of manipulation where participation in the strategy is required and the movement of the target individuals is provided unilaterally in a specific direction.

These strategies are presented without value judgments, as changing conditions may require any one of them at a particular time. The major prerequisite in selection of an appropriate strategy, I believe, is to use the results of an organizational analysis at your institution to look at student development from the viewpoint of the "other guy" at your institution - not as a grand philosophy of student development, but as a problem that your program may be creating for him. In this way you can play ways to anticipate and elicit his support and then develop specific tactics to overcome his objections and "convince" him of the viability of the student development concept of your specific program or strategy for him, or at least, ways it can help in the solution of his organizational problems. Attention to this principle is not always possible while remaining consistent with the student development concept, but continuous neglect of it will lead to institutional discontinuities that will provide the base for the eventual subversion of the institutional foundation upon which student development in higher education is dependent.

While we will be concerned with specific strategies for your individual campuses in our groups, I want to mention a few general alternatives now. These are a synthesis of many that have been proposed as well as my own experiences. One alternative strategy is to view implementation as a problem to be solved. The emphasis is on an accurate assessment of the problem's parameters. A second alternative is that of power development where the building of coalitions in a political or bargaining sense within the institution is maintained. A third system is called SWOT'S, which emphasizes the assessment of Strengths and Weaknesses and the utilization of Opportunities and Threats. The final strategy to be considered here is an application of Carkhuff's concepts of interpersonal effectiveness to the structural effectiveness of institutions. This emphasis on the development of institutional personnel within the total organization is a more complex and comprehensive concept that staff development of institutional subsystems.

All of the preceeding concerns changing the institution to one degree or another for the potential of implementing student development. The specific tactics and techniques that will be used in any organization are varied and subject only to the limitations of the resources you can accumulate either personally or institutionally. A partial listing here is intended to stimulate further suggestions and to build on the skills and roles thatBrown outlined, rather than to provide all of the possible tactics that can be used at the various stages of the implementation process.

brainstorming	discussion	consultants
interviewing	reaction theory	one-ups-manship
pork barrelling	confrontation	hot spot
homework	evidence presentation	non-related positive
face saving	observation	feedback
bargaining	costs/benefits analysis	rewards
MBO	agressive neglect	counseling

ET CETERA!

In conclusion higher education institutions are becoming increasingly complex. Students going to college are becoming increasingly more heterogeneous. The student development concept is an attempt to solve the inevitable conflict between these two trends. You will have to be the agents to resolve these situations regardless of your institutional position. Napoleon Hill described the 55 great IFs as barriers to human achievement. If only I were rich, if only I had power, if only I were intelligent enough, if only I were younger, if only I were older, or if only I had more pull. I have one additional IF, which I hope will not be a barrier to your active participation in the development of organizational skills -- If we don't become a part of the process to implement organizationally a reduction of the consequences resulting from the daily interface between students and "the system," to alter that familiar phrase I quoted earlier, not only won't we be a part of the solution, but we ARE the problem and we probably will be uncomfortable with the consequences.

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Survey Activities for

ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS AND

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

for

_____

at

_____

Presented by

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STUDENT DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Goal - The resources and personnel of _____ will be organized to integrate academic, social, personal, and community experiences for the comprehensive development of students.

Advantages for Students -

Advantages for _____ -

Advantages for _____ -

NOTES -

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RESOURCES ANALYSIS

Goal -

Structural Aspects -

Personnel Aspects -

NOTES -

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PERSONNEL ANALYSIS

_____
key person

Reaction to New Situations-

adapts	initiates
analyses	organizes
concedes	resists
disapproves	retreats
evades	tolerates

Reaction to Others-

accepts	judges
acquiesces	leads
agrees	listens
assists	manipulates
cooperates	motivates
criticizes	obligates
influences	stimulates

Problems-

NOTES-

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IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

1) Strategy Style -

2) Goal -

3) Strategy Objectives -

A)

B)

C)

4) Alternative Tactics

	ACTION	SKILL	WHO/ WHAT	WHEN	CONSEQUENCES
A) 1.					
2.					
3.					
B) 1.					
2.					
3.					
C) 1.					
2.					
3.					